836 pure until her marriage," said Dr. Vermale elsewhere. "Those are sentiments which the Tuareg do not understand. Thus, as soon as she is nubile, she goes to the ohal and it is not long before she is deflowered. Virginity does not exist and has no representative value in the eyes of the Tuareg." (2) Indeed, the women are

2. Op. cit., p. 171.

more or less easy. Some give themselves to the first comer; others grant their favors to only a small group of friends. To grant them only to a single person, however, would be judged in very bad taste and a sign of perversion.

[839 577] [554]

No one finds fault with their free mores, on the condition that they let themselves be courted only by men of a social condition equal to their own. Some women let themselves be courted by slaves and that is considered a shame for them.

842 /290/ One may be astonished that unwed mothers are not more numerous with such dissolute mores. Contraception is commonly used, and, as Dr. Foley said, effusio seminis inter crura is probably the frequent conclusion of the nocturnal rendezvous after the ahal. (1) These restrictive measures must not be unre-

[833]

1. Moeurs et médecine des Touaregs de l'Ahaggar /Ahaggar Tuareg Mores and Medicine/, p. 56.

lated to the low birth rate of the Tuareg, and it is quite possible that the married Tuareg woman continues to practice them.

847 Bearing children out of wedlock and bastardy (agama) are the object of public discredit. The Tuareg rarely practice abortion, but infanticides used to be quite numerous, and no one thought of being offended by them. When a woman finds herself pregnant

[848]

836 /141 cont./ as are the other customs; there is one very
864 interesting one, the respect for the Tuareg girl. Contrary to a commonly held opinion, the young girl about to be married is always a virgin (physically) among the nobles and nearly always one among the imrads.

•839 In their first youth, the Tuareg behave as do all the children of the world; they practice solitary masturbation, girls and boys using procedures characteristic of the country.

786 The first amorous relations between Tuareg girls and boys take place after celebrations. It is well to describe these celebrations, for accounts of the famous "courts of love" have been much exaggerated.

We have seen that the Tuareg organize a tendi on the
[534] occasion of a family ceremony. The tendi takes its name from the instrument used, the large wooden mortar over which is stretched a skin which has been dampened previously. The women gather around the tendi, and one or two beat out traditional rhythms on the skin, which resonates dully. One of the women chants an endless series of couplets while her companions mark the measure by clapping hands and take up the refrain in chorus. The songs evoke past combats as well as recent events; they vaunt the merits of a camel or those of a person; some are improvised. Widows, divorced women, and young girls take part in the tendi, but married women, with the permission of their husbands, also go. A woman leaves the tendi if one of her parents approaches it.

The songs continue, accompanied by the tom-tom; the men then come to sit behind the singers, listen, and also sing. Each hugs his female companion next to him, but hardly passes the limits of a public flirtation. The tendi continues late into the night while the old people sleep in the tents.

526 In the daytime the tendi is the indispensable accompaniment of the ilougan, which may be defined as "a tournament on camel back."

584 /143/ There is a language of the hands which supplements the conversation of the ahal; here are several examples. Having taken the woman's hand with fingers interlocked, to place one's thumb against the end of her thumb means: "I desire you very much." To trace a circle in the palm of the hand, pressing the index finger in the center of the circle, is to ask for an intimate union. The woman thus solicited takes the hand of her suitor and traces a line with the back of her index finger going from the wrist toward the fingers, which means: "I refuse." But if having done this, she traces another one in the other direction, it means: "Leave with your friends and come back alone."

584 833 Once alone with his girl friend, the young Targui will continue to pay his court, sometimes platonic, often less so. Putting their faces together, nostril against nostril, they breathe together. This type of kiss is known for the mouth too but is little practiced. Manual caresses follow the kisses. The men often stop at this stage with virgins, for they know how to "recognize a virgin by her walk, her bearing, the firmness of her breasts, and the reflex of her Achilles tendon!" The Tuareg know other caresses which satisfy the senses but respect physical virginity.

838 It must be noted that homosexuality, male or female, is unknown among the Tuareg.

● 839 It is said that bestiality, although very rare, does exist; but supposedly it is practiced as a remedy for venereal diseases.

These sexual customs make it possible to understand the stability of the Tuareg, who, although Moslems, do not suffer from suppressed desires. Rape does not exist, and when a woman refuses a man, he never insists, nor will he show himself jealous of a more successful comrade. Let us add that they are absolutely discreet about their relations with women. It is in these manifestations of the intimate life that one sees the prestige enjoyed by the Tuareg woman.